



# Southampton Through the eyes of F. G. O. Stuart

## The Postcard Collection Vol 1

by  
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*In memory of my dearest Mother and Niece*

*Now in our Lords Embrace*

***Brenda Butler 1936-2020***

***and***

***Anya Burns 1991-2020***

## **Francis Godolphin Osborne Stuart (1843–1923)**

### **The Southampton photographer.**

Affectionately shortened to F G O Francis was born on the 2nd of October 1843 and baptised in the Parish of Crathie and Braemar, Aberdeenshire, Scotland. To understand why Francis Stuart was named Francis 'Godolphin Osborne' Stuart we go back to his birth place in Braemar.

The sporting/hunting lodge known as 'Mar Lodge' in the beautiful countryside of Scotland lay just 5 miles to the west of Braemar, it was built in 1895 by the 1st Duke of Fife.

Mar Lodge required staffing and the land required a game keeper, Francis was born into the family of a game keeper, his father Robert was a game keeper and his mother Margaret was a house keeper, Francis was named after the Duke of Leeds a title for the Osborne family.

Sir Edward Osborne who died in 1592 was the Lord Mayor of London his descendants would have titles in the English peerage and the lands they owned would change hands. Mar Lodge was acquired as a family residence in the 19th century, 'Francis Godolphin Osborne' (1751-1799) was actually the name given to the 5th Duke of Leeds, this Francis was a English politician who served as Foreign Secretary under William Pitt the Younger.

A son of the 5th Duke was another 'Francis Godolphin Osborne' (1777-1850), and so to honour the 'Godolphin Osborne' family who employed locals on their estate, our Southampton born 'Francis Godolphin Osborne' born in Scotland was so named.

Although the naming of our Southampton photographer may have had another motive as those privileged folk that made Scotland their home turning large areas into hunting estates for their and their friends pleasure playgrounds were prone to kicking Scots of the land they now controlled, with local hunting and fishing restricted only to the rich, local settlements of Scots folk were dispersed.

Seen as a lodger in the 1861 Census, Francis aged 18 gave his occupation as an assistant draper when living at 33 Charlotte Street, Aberdeen. Not long after and just a mile away he would find employment with the Aberdeen photography business of 'Andrew Adams' who were based at Retties's Court, 26 Broad Street, Aberdeen, where working as a cabinet maker and learning the photography business it is likely he was making the old wooden boxes/cabinets associated with early photography.

Francis had found something he enjoyed 'Photography' and would soon strike out on his own, his natural ability for the composition of a good photograph was put to good use when he moved to London and set up his own photography business.

In 1873 Francis married a Scottish lass 'Agnes Isabella Leid' in Surrey who was also born in 1843 and came from Aberdeenshire. In 1881 the couple are seen living at number 4 Hamlet Terrace, Anerly Road London, not far from Crystal Palace, at this time Francis is seen working as a photographer and was employing two men and a boy to assist him in the business. During his time in London Francis produced some fine photographs of old London Town and its landmarks.

Within a year Francis was on the move again, he and his wife would move to Southampton, where they had their only child 'Flora' who was born in Southampton in 1882. The Steven's directory of 1884 tells us that Francis was working from his new Studio in Bedford Place a lovely house with a shop premises below called 'Westbourne House' which still stands today on the corner with Canton Street, although the studio of FGO has long gone and another shop sits at ground level Francis's first Southampton home is still there.

By 1887 Francis had moved to number 57 Cromwell Road in Southampton and moved his studio to the larger premises of number 61 Cromwell Road, a large building that also still stands today. Francis also acquired number 59 Cromwell Road and by 1895 he had formed another business allied to his own photography business which he called the 'National Photographic Company', this new company working from Cromwell Road supplied gelatine dry plates and printing out papers for those in the photography business or to amateurs that were pursuing their hobby.

Francis began producing postcards around 1901 and with his son-in-law 'Charlie Stewart Storey Dowson' who took over the family business would produce over 2,500 postcards between them. With around half of those taken of an early Southampton and surrounding towns it's hard to imagine an old Southampton town without the photographs of F.G.O. Stewart, whose images are often used to show the difference between the old and new in our 'Then & Now' comparisons in our History groups.

One of the early printers for F.G.O. Postcards that Francis used was that of 'Carl Gottlieb Röder who was born in Leipzig-Stötteritz , Germany in 1812, Carl the German printer of sheet music and postcards opened a branch in London, England in 1900 and was able to print our Francis some great quality postcards.

Then in 1914 Great Britain was at war with Germany, and so due to the political climate German produced products whether it be beer or postcards fell out of favour with the British. Francis would seek out other printers for his postcards and partly due to the war, quality materials saw a decline in the quality of F.G.O.'s postcards.

At the age of 80, Francis Godolphin Osborne Stuart died on the 1st of November 1923 at 57 Cromwell Road in his adopted town of Southampton, which was the same house where his dear wife Agnes died twenty three years earlier on the 19th of May 1900 aged 57.

Francis was buried in Southampton Old Cemetery, in his will Francis left his daughter Flora Dowson effects to the value of £1,280 15s and her husband Charlie continued to run the family business.

"Perhaps the man who put the face of Southampton on postcards which then travelled and were enjoyed around the world should be remembered in our modern city."





THE SOUTHAMPTON WAR MEMORIAL.  
2125. F. G. O. Stuart.

*Southampton Sotonians and friends*





2144. F. G. O. Stuart.

WATTS PARK, SOUTHAMPTON.

*Southampton Sotonians and friends*



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F. G. O. Stuart. 657

The Bargate, Southampton

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F. G. O. Stuart. Publisher.

THE BARGATE. SOUTHAMPTON (601)

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F. G. O. Stuart, 1959

The Bargate, Southampton

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